

We Must Keep Education Alive In Our Schools

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I bring tidings to you during this holiday season as I journey down the path of schools, parents and students. I ambitiously contemplate the possibilities of what lies ahead for our children as we continue to ponder the solutions to the crisis of public education in our country.

There have been a host of scenarios, opportunities, surprises, coincidences, disappointments and celebrations in our schools over the years. Most recently celebrated was *Brown v. Board of Education*—fifty years later. We know from where we have come; commemorating fifty years of the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States, officially ending imposed segregation in public education. But, the question remains, where do we go from here?

No Child Left Behind Act; (NCLB)

signed by President George Bush on January 8, 2002, provided new education options for many families. This federal law allows for parents to take advantage of free tutoring if their child attends a school that needs improvement or is unsafe. How many parents and guardians are aware of this law and have exercised the right to request “in school” tutoring for their child? Or maybe the real question is how many of our children have been left behind? Is this two year old law in direct conflict with the federal special education law, which focuses on developing individualized education plans and goals with children with disabilities based on their special needs?

Continuing down the path, in an attempt to “reduce truancy”, we continue to search for ways to use attendance as a means to advance goals for student learning. In Philadelphia, more than 150 parents have been trained as truant officers to visit homes and talk to families where students have missed class.

“Getting parents more involved” in the

education of their children is imperative.

Crusin’ still on this path, we drive “head-first” into the windshield of socioeconomic inequalities in our school systems. How do we master getting all of our children on the same page; to engage ourselves as active participants in the quest to achieve excellence for our children?

Flash backs of the state of our education system shatters our dreams as we revisit statistics from the National School Safety Center (NSSC) reminding us all of the high stakes of school safety. NSSC, reports that one child in ten is regularly attacked verbally or physically by bullies, and elementary school age children who are the most frequent targets of bullying by older students.

Unfortunately, not all of our students feel safe and connected. Partnering to improve education is the path for success for our children. We must bring “Joy to our World”, and celebrate this holiday season with the gift of connecting communities, cultures and classrooms, to encourage

children to respect one another.

We must value diversity and take positive actions to build stronger communities that are more inclusive.

The creation of these communities will require a comprehensive approach among educators, parents, community members and students to replace fear, anxiety and disrespect with caring, kindness, empathy and trust—qualities that are essential to a healthy nurturing environment in which student can feel safe and secure in learning.

“We cannot be separated in interest or divided in purpose. We stand together until the end.”

Woodrow Wilson